



---

OCEAN FUTURES 2030 – POLICY BRIEF #1 | MARCH 2024

---

# Ocean Futures 2030: Science and diplomacy for ocean governance – our common ocean

---



UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN

▶ ▶ ▶ Summary of outcomes of the Ocean Futures 2030 event held in February 2024 in Brussels with recommendations on how science diplomacy can be an instrument for ocean equity.

### 3 key questions

- How can scientists contribute to the ocean governance of the future?
- Are the existing frameworks for ocean governance fit for the future?
- What interactions can be devised between mechanisms to ensure an ocean governance fit for the future?

### Introduction

The event "[Ocean Futures 2030: Science and diplomacy for ocean governance – our common ocean](#)" took place 21 February 2024 at Norway House in Brussels. The atmosphere at the event was reminiscent of a side event and upsized. As members of the audience put it: "It was like a side event on steroids!" and "The room was buzzing!" Differentiating it from the often "safe" gatherings at science diplomacy events where scientists are mainly speaking between themselves.

With a wide global presence at the heart of the EU the particular composition of representatives at the event to discuss the ocean-climate-biodiversity nexus was unusual. The diversity of participants from science, diplomacy (including quite a few ambassadors), the EU Parliament, the EU Commission, the UN system, and the global south made the event appealing and dynamic. From a certain perspective, the design of the event was high risk, high gain and in the process reshaping how to create a science diplomacy event.

The event showed clearly what is at stake in ocean diplomacy. From something as common albeit complex as negotiating a fisheries agreement to something as transcendental and sobering as dealing with the disappearance of a sovereign state and its millenary culture due to sea level rise, there is a full spectrum of stakes at play in ocean governance.

The field of science diplomacy has a tendency be full of ideas of science diplomacy but not from the ocean and climate frontline. However, science diplomacy is urgently needed at the frontlines of the crises in the world today. Much science diplomacy is entangled in western notions of biotech, advanced technology, geopolitics, etc but not so well focused on the justice dimension of global challenges, e.g., the ocean-climate-biodiversity nexus and the climate change frontline.

Science diplomacy needs to pivot more towards addressing the diplomatic demands for scientific solutions to urgent, global challenges. This shift necessitates moving away from a paradigm where scientists are not adequately woven into the diplomatic framework.

### Analysis

The Ocean Futures 2030 event showed that science diplomacy can be a tool to make ocean diplomacy more effective. To achieve this, ocean diplomacy and science diplomacy should be brought together and called ocean science diplomacy.

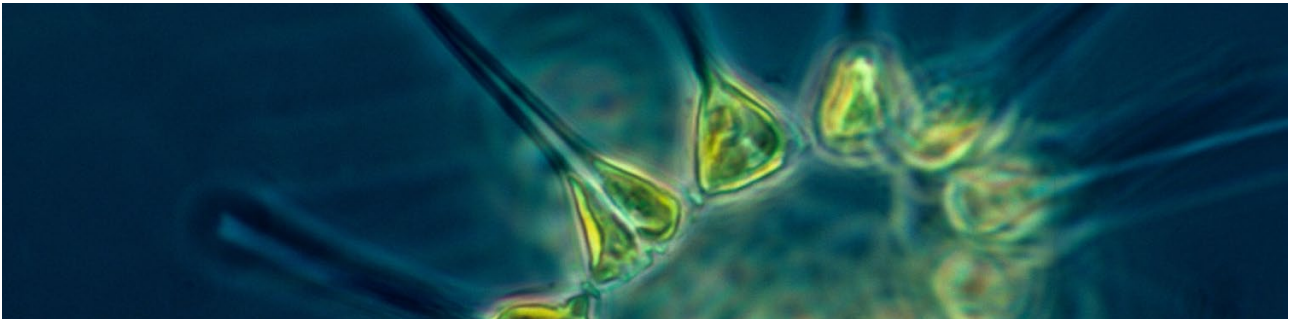
The themes where science diplomacy can contribute to ocean diplomacy are many, and just to mention a few of the emerging themes in ocean governance we list: Fisheries and aquaculture, biodiversity conservation, marine protected areas, deep-sea mining, ocean acidification and deoxygenation, plastics pollution, marine carbon dioxide removal (with connections to tech diplomacy), marine genetic resources (with connections to health diplomacy), and more.

As part of a common ocean governance the countries of the world are currently in the implementation stages on global agreements that affect the ocean, e.g., biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and various commitments under the Conference of the Parties (COPs) of various ocean-related multilateral environmental agreements.

To engage meaningfully in the implementation processes the main agreements on global ocean governance need to be strengthened globally. Consideration should be given to strengthening dialogue between levels of governance, e.g., between UN, EU, and national levels and in general between the global south and the global north. Existing frameworks for direct science-policy discussion need to be explored and utilized more efficiently.

Science diplomacy in its ideal form is a platform to unite scientists, policy makers, and diplomats. Currently science diplomacy remains lopsided towards the scientific community. This needs to change as the uniqueness of the Ocean Futures 2030 event demonstrated.

The science diplomacy of the future must reinforce the synergies brought forward in discussions at the event, e.g., synergy between levels, stakeholders, topics, opinions, different types of knowledge. The essence of science diplomacy is to create a fertile synergy generated by bringing scientists and diplomats into exchanges.



To succeed in this endeavour science diplomacy must interact more directly with the global south and indigenous and local knowledge. Who decides what is a topic? Who decides what is knowledge? This is a matter of justice. Global justice. It is not acceptable to talk about the global south, we should talk with the global south.

Among topics discussed were science justice, linguistic diversity, convening power, climate and environmental justice, ocean equity, and in general the concept of inequality in conjunction with other elements such as connecting the global levels of justice across various frontlines. In the case of the All-Atlantic Ocean Alliance the literature from the partners in the global south disagree with the self-congratulatory tone of the global north.

A push in resources from the ocean (e.g., minerals, fisheries, tourism, energy) intensify ongoing geopolitical developments (e.g., the South China Sea, long distance fishing fleets, disputed maritime areas). The global increase in human interaction with the ocean reinforces the increased need for global agreements and frameworks. Ocean science diplomacy must address these issues. The EU Science Diplomacy Alliance has established ocean science diplomacy as one of its Thematic Entry Points (TEP) to address this issue.

## Conclusions

For good and relevant science diplomacy you need both a supply and a demand side. More interaction between science and diplomacy is needed, including the genuine involvement of the global south and their organisations

and groupings (such as the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States, the Africa Group, and AOSIS) in all aspects. This will ensure a constant, mutually reinforcing flow of relevant knowledge and information. Expressing demands for science-based knowledge, in combination with other forms of knowledge, will create new agendas and arenas for science diplomacy.

A result of this would be to develop stronger science diplomacy ties between the global south and the global north. It must become mandatory to involve partners from the global south in science diplomacy activities. As part of this, local and indigenous knowledge must work with scientific knowledge to put different forms of knowledge on an equal footing. This is necessary to achieve global justice incorporating science justice. The pluralisation of science is one way to reach science justice. Norway serves as an example of this with its policy of always including a partner from the global south in its UN activities.

The objective of ocean science diplomacy is to bring together ocean and science diplomacy. This means putting the practitioners and scholars of both ocean and science diplomacy more directly in touch with each other. This will unite the cases and the experiences of those involved in different forms of diplomacy and strengthen both the ocean and science diplomacy agendas.

Events such as Ocean Futures 2030 are a way of achieving direct dialogues and create a fertile forum to identify and develop the priorities of ocean science diplomacy and the research needed to underpin this.

## Recommendations

- We recommend the EU in its ongoing work to establish a science diplomacy framework to integrate ocean science diplomacy into this framework and to include ocean science diplomacy funding opportunities in the upcoming Horizon Europe (FP10) programme.
- The countries of the global north (e.g., EU, Norway, USA, Canada, Japan) must commit to a stronger collaboration with the global south in all aspects of ocean science and diplomacy. This includes making sure that traditional knowledge and scientific knowledge can work together to provide the science diplomacy of the future.
- The countries of the global north must secure/guarantee funding for more joint global south and north initiatives in ocean science diplomacy to fulfil global commitments for the ocean as manifested in SDG14, Life Below Water, and the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

This policy brief is the result of the Ocean Futures 2030 event at Norway House in Brussels 21 February and contributions to a discussion at a post event meeting at the UiB Brussels offices 22 February 2024.

## IMPRINT

Ocean Futures 2030 policy brief series, editorial group:  
Edvard Hviding, João Bettencourt, Sverre Ole Drønen  
OCEAN FUTURES 2030 POLICY BRIEF #1

## Relevance to the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development

This policy brief is particularly relevant to [Ocean Decade Challenge](#) 5 (Unlock ocean-based solutions to climate change), 9 (Skills, knowledge and technology for all) and 10 (Change humanity's relationship with the ocean).

## Authors

Professor [Edvard Hviding](#), Department of Social Anthropology, University of Bergen

Postdoctoral researcher [João Bettencourt](#), Geophysical Institute and fellow in the Shaping European Research Leaders for Marine Sustainability (SEAS) programme, University of Bergen

Senior adviser [Sverre Ole Drønen](#), Division of Research and Innovation, University of Bergen

## Contributors

Professor [Rasmus Gjedssø Bertelsen](#), UiT – the Arctic University of Norway

Professor [Lise Øvreås](#), University of Bergen

Fisheries expert [Peter Nyongesa Wekesa](#), Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States

Postdoctoral research associate [Sam Robinson](#), University of York

Project manager [Jenny Turton](#), Arctic Frontiers

Associate Professor [Jennifer E. Telesca](#), Radboud University

Science diplomacy coordinator [Eric Piaget](#), UNU-CRIS and VUB/EUTOPIA

## Key references

[Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction](#) (BBNJ), draft agreement, New York, March 2023

[Convention on Biological Diversity](#) (CBD) with the [COP15 framework for biological diversity](#), Montreal, December 2022

[The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) (IPCC)

[Outcome statement](#) of the first European Conference on Science Diplomacy, Madrid, December 2023

[Strengthening Science Diplomacy in and for Europe through Horizon Europe](#), policy brief from the EU Science Diplomacy Alliance, February 2024

[EU Mission: Restore our Ocean and Waters](#)

[Statement by the ERC Scientific Council on the next European framework programme for research and innovation](#) (FP10)

[UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development](#) (2021-2030)

[International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development](#) (2024-2033)

[International Decade of Indigenous Languages](#) (2022-2032)

[Scientific imaginaries and science diplomacy: The case of ocean exploitation](#) (Sam Robinson, paper, Centaurus/Wiley Online Library, 2020)

[Traditional knowledge and the BBNJ instrument](#) (Clement Yow Mulalap, Edvard Hviding, et al, paper, Marine Policy/Elsevier, 2020)

[Coloniality in science diplomacy-evidence from the Atlantic Ocean](#) (Andrei Polejack, paper, Science and Public Policy/Oxford Academic, 2023)

[Africa's Science Diplomacy](#) (Thokozani Simelane, Hilary I. Inyang, chapter in The Palgrave Handbook of Diplomatic Thought and Practice in the Digital Age, Springer International Publishing, 2023)

[Science Diplomacy in Latin America and the Caribbean: Current Landscape, Challenges, and Future Perspectives](#) (Marga Gual Soler, Frontiers in Research Metrics and Analytics, Frontiers, 2021)



UNIVERSITY  
OF BERGEN



UiT The Arctic  
University of Norway

ARCTIC  
FRONTIERS



SEAS

@ OceanFutures@uib.no

uib.no/en/osb

X @SDGbergen